



U.S. DEPARTMENT of STATE

Qatar

Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - [2003](#)

Released by the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor
February 25, 2004

Qatar is a monarchy governed by the ruling Al Thani family through its head, the Amir Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, who with the support of other leading families, took power from his father in 1995. The Amir holds power, the exercise of which is influenced by religious law, consultation with leading citizens, rule by consensus, and the right of any citizen to gain access to the Amir to appeal government decisions. The Amir generally legislates after consultation with leading citizens, an arrangement institutionalized in an appointed advisory council that assists the Amir in formulating policy. In April, approximately 96 percent of voters approved a draft Constitution by referendum. The Constitution provides for hereditary rule by the Amir's branch of the Al Thani family. The Constitution provides legislative authority to a new Advisory Council, consisting of 30 elected and 15 appointed members. In April, citizens participated in the country's second free and fair elections for the Central Municipal Council. The Constitution provides for an independent judiciary; however, approximately 50 percent of the judges are foreign nationals and all judges hold their positions at the Government's discretion.

The civilian security force, controlled by the Interior Ministry, consists of the police and the General Administration of Public Security. There is one civilian intelligence service, Qatari State Security, which was established in June through a merger of the former General Intelligence Service (mukhabarat) and the Investigation and State Security Service (mubahith). Like its predecessors, Qatari State Security reports directly to the Amiri Diwan and performs internal security investigations, gathers intelligence, and has primary responsibility for sedition and espionage cases. The civilian authorities maintained effective control of the security forces. There were no reports that security forces committed human rights abuses.

The country has a mixed economy. The population is approximately 600,000 of whom 150,000 are believed to be citizens. The Government owns most basic industries and services, but the retail and construction industries are privately owned. Oil is the principal natural resource exploited for revenue, but the country's extensive natural gas resources are increasingly important. Foreign workers, mostly South Asian and Arab, represent approximately 85 percent of the workforce. Many government jobs are offered generally only to citizens and private sector businesses are encouraged to recruit citizens as well.

Although there were problems in some areas, the Government's overall human rights records improved in some areas during the year. The country has taken significant steps toward democratic governance; however, citizens did not have the right to peacefully change their government. The Government severely limited the rights of assembly and association. The Government restricted freedom of religion, although it continued to take some steps to ease restrictions on the practice of non-Muslim religions. The law and social customs restricted women's rights. The Government severely restricted workers' rights. At times, some domestic servants were mistreated and abused. Noncitizens, who make up more than 75 percent of local residents, faced discrimination in the workplace. The country also was a destination for trafficked persons.

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

Section 1 Respect for the Integrity of the Person, Including Freedom From:

a. Arbitrary or Unlawful Deprivation of Life

There were no reports of the arbitrary or unlawful deprivation of life committed by the Government or its agents.

b. Disappearance

There were no reports of politically motivated disappearances.

c. Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

The law prohibits torture, and there were no reports that government officials employed it. However, the Government administered most corporal punishment prescribed by Islamic law but did not allow amputation. Punishments were not

administered publicly.

Prison conditions generally met international standards. Women were held separately from men, and juveniles were held separately from adults. Pretrial detainees were held separately from convicted prisoners. The Government permitted the independent monitoring of prison conditions; however, there were no such visits during the year.

d. Arbitrary Arrest, Detention, or Exile

The law prohibits arbitrary arrest and detention and the Government generally observed these prohibitions. The authorities generally charged suspects within 48 hours, and had 4 days to present suspects before a judge, who may order the suspect released, remanded to custody to await trial, held in pretrial detention pending investigation, or released on bail. Lengthy pretrial detention was not known to occur. The accused is entitled to legal representation throughout the process. There were no provisions for state funded legal counsel for indigents. Suspects who were detained in security cases generally were afforded access to counsel; however, they may be detained indefinitely while under investigation. During the year, there were no cases of incommunicado detention.

The Ministry of the Interior controls the police forces which include the Coast Guard and Border Police, Fire Department, and Immigration Authorities. They generally were effective and corruption and abuse of power were minimal. During the year, the Ministry of the Interior established an Office of Human Rights in its Legal Department.

The Constitution prohibits forced exile of citizens, and there were no reported cases during the year.

e. Denial of Fair Public Trial

Although the Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, most judges were foreign nationals holding residence permits granted by the civil authorities. All judges held their positions at the Government's discretion. Approximately 50 percent of the judges are citizens. The Amir appoints all judges for renewable 3-year terms.

During the year a new law united the Adlea (Civil Law) courts and Shari'a (Islamic law) courts under a Supreme Judiciary Council. Prosecutors remained under the authority of the Ministry of Interior.

The Adlea courts have jurisdiction in commercial, national security, trafficking, and criminal matters. The Shari'a courts have jurisdiction in family, inheritance, deportation, wrongful injury, and most other civil cases. The law provides for the establishment of ad hoc state security courts, although there have been no cases before these courts since the Amir assumed power. Defendants tried by all courts have the right to appeal. The Appeals Court is the highest in the country.

The Shari'a courts applied most principles contained in the draft Family Status Law, which covered marriage, inheritance, and juvenile matters, to cases under adjudication. Shari'a trials usually were brief. Shari'a family law trials often were held without counsel; however, an increasing number of litigants, especially women, used lawyers to present their cases.

Criminal cases normally were tried within 2 to 3 months after suspects were detained. Suspects were entitled to bail, except in cases of violent crime. Foreigners who were charged with minor crimes could be released to a citizen sponsor, although they were prohibited from departing the country until the case was resolved. Defendants in the civil courts had the right to be represented by defense attorneys.

Both Muslim and non-Muslim litigants may request the Shari'a courts to assume jurisdiction in family, commercial, and civil cases. Trials in both the Adlea and the Shari'a courts were public, but the presiding judge can close the courtroom to the public if the case is deemed sensitive. Lawyers prepare litigants and speak for them during the hearing. Non-Arabic speakers were provided with interpreters. Defendants were entitled to legal representation throughout the trial and pretrial process.

Foreign residents were disadvantaged in cases involving the performance of labor contracts.

Defendants appeared before a judge for a preliminary hearing within 4 days of their arrest. Judges may extend pretrial detention for 1 week at a time to allow the authorities to conduct investigations. Lengthy pretrial detention was not known to occur.

There were no reports of political prisoners.

f. Arbitrary Interference with Privacy, Family, Home, or Correspondence

The law prohibits such actions, and the Government generally respected these prohibitions in practice. Traditional attitudes of respect for the sanctity of the home and the privacy of women provided protection against arbitrary intrusion for both citizens and noncitizens. Judicial authorities must grant warrants before police may search a residence or business, except in cases involving national security or emergencies. There were no reports of unauthorized searches of homes during the year. The police and security forces were believed to monitor the telephone calls of suspected criminals, of those considered to be

security risks, and of selected foreigners.

Citizens must obtain government permission to marry foreigners and to apply for residence permits or citizenship for their spouses; such permission generally was granted.

Section 2 Respect for Civil Liberties, Including:

a. Freedom of Speech and Press

The Constitution provides for freedom of speech and of the press; however, the Government imposed some restrictions on these rights in practice. Journalists continued to practice self-censorship due to social and political pressures when reporting on government policies, the ruling family, and relations with neighboring states.

Citizens expressed many of their views freely and in public, though they avoided discussing sensitive political and religious issues. The larger noncitizen population did not express itself as freely or as publicly. The Government did not prosecute anyone for the expression of views considered offensive.

Three Arabic and two English daily newspapers are not state-owned; however, the owners or board members generally are either high-level government officials or have ties to government officials. Copies of foreign newspapers and magazines were censored for explicit sexual content.

Although personal criticism of government officials was rare, the performance of ministries was the subject of extensive reporting. During the year, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture was publicly criticized for its decision to make insurance mandatory for small business owners, and its failure to provide adequate facilities for slaughtering animals.

The Censorship Office in the Qatar Radio and Television Corporation reviewed materials for pornography and material deemed hostile to Islam. There were no reports of political censorship of foreign print or broadcast news media or foreign programs.

Customs officials screened imported print media, videocassettes, and similar items for pornography, but no longer blocked the personal importation of non-Islamic religious items (see Section 2.c.). The law provides for criminal penalties and jail sentences for libel. All cases involving the media fall under the jurisdiction of the criminal courts.

State-owned television and radio reflected government views, but the private satellite television network, Al-Jazeera Satellite Channel (JSC), provided an internationally oriented perspective that JSC and the Government both claimed to be free of government influence. Although it is privately owned, since its inception, the Government has paid some of JSC's operating costs. JSC programs generally did not cover local news. Callers to a popular morning show on the state-owned radio frequently discussed topics such as government inefficiency and the lack of responsiveness by various ministries to citizens' needs, such as poor schools, failure to deliver adequate water and sewage services, and problems with the health care system.

More than 80,000 residents access the Internet, which was provided through the privatized telecommunications monopoly. The Government censored the Internet for political, religious, and pornographic content through a proxy server, which blocked websites containing certain key words and phrases. A user who believes that a site was censored mistakenly could submit the Web address to have the site reviewed for suitability.

The Constitution provides for freedom of opinion and scientific research; however, there was no tradition of academic freedom, and instructors at the University exercised self-censorship.

b. Freedom of Peaceful Assembly and Association

The Constitution provides for freedom of assembly; however, the Government severely limited this right in practice. The Government generally did not allow political demonstrations.

The Constitution provides for freedom of association; however, the Government severely limited this right in practice. The Government did not allow political parties or international professional organizations critical of the Government or of any other Arab government. Private social, sport, trade, professional, and cultural societies must be registered with the Government and registration of such groups routinely was granted. Security forces monitored the activities of such groups.

c. Freedom of Religion

The Constitution provides for freedom of worship, in accordance with the law and the requirements of protecting the public system and public behavior; however, the Government continued to prohibit proselytization of Muslims by non-Muslims and placed some restrictions on public worship.

The state religion is Islam, as interpreted by the conservative Wahhabi order of the Sunni branch. While Shi'a Muslims practiced most aspects of Islam freely, they did not organize traditional Shi'a ceremonies or perform rites such as self-flagellation in public.

The Government and ruling family are linked inextricably to Islam. The Ministry of Islamic Affairs administers the construction of mosques, clerical affairs, and Islamic education for adults and new converts. The Ministry of Education administers Islamic Education in the public schools. The Amir participated in public prayers during both Eid holiday periods, and personally financed the Hajj journeys of poor pilgrims.

Shi'a Muslims were well represented in the bureaucracy and business community, but there were no Shi'as employed in senior national security positions.

The Government has given legal status to Catholic, Anglican, Orthodox, Coptic, and many Asian Christian denominations; other Christian congregations may request recognition. However, the Government does not allow the building of new non-Muslim places of worship without permission. In May, it provided congregations with registration numbers that allows them to open bank accounts and sponsor clergy for visas. During the year, Christian officials continued to seek authorization to construct churches on government-reserved land; however, the Government had not issued building permits by year's end.

Non-Muslims may not proselytize, and the Government places some restrictions on public worship by non-Muslims. Converting from Islam is considered apostasy, and is technically a capital offense; however, since 1971, there have been no records of prosecution for such a crime.

The Government did not permit Hindus, Buddhists, Bahai's or members of other religions to operate as freely as Christian congregations. However, there was no official effort to prevent adherents of these faiths from practicing privately.

The Government formally prohibited the publication, importation, and distribution of non-Islamic religious literature; however, in practice individuals generally were not prevented from importing Bibles and other religious items for personal use. Religious materials for use at Christmas and Easter were available readily in local shops. However, Bibles were not available in Arabic.

Islamic instruction was compulsory in public schools. While there were no restrictions on non-Muslims providing private religious instruction for children, most foreign children attended secular private schools.

For a more detailed discussion, see the [2003 International Religious Freedom Report](#).

d. Freedom of Movement within the Country, Foreign Travel, Emigration, and Repatriation

The law provides for these rights, and the Government generally respected them in practice; however, there were some notable exceptions. There were no restrictions on internal travel, except around sensitive military and oil installations. In general, women did not require permission from male guardians to travel; however, men may prevent female relatives and children from leaving the country by providing their names to immigration officers at ports of departure. Technically women employed by the Government must obtain official permission to travel abroad when requesting leave, but the extent to which this regulation was enforced was not known. The Government did not allow noncitizen parents, even if they have custody of their children, to take them out of the country without the permission of the citizen parent. Citizens critical of the Government sometimes faced restrictions on their right to travel abroad.

The Constitution provides that citizens have the right to return. Foreigners were subject to restrictions on entry and exit designed to control the size of the local labor force (see Sections 6.c. and 6.d.). Foreign women who are married to citizens were granted residence permits and may apply for citizenship; however, they were expected to relinquish their foreign citizenship.

The Government has not formulated a formal policy to provide refugee status or asylum to persons who meet the definition in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. Those attempting to enter the country illegally, including persons seeking asylum from nearby countries, were refused entry. Asylum seekers who were able to obtain local sponsorship or employment were allowed to enter and may remain as long as they are employed.

There were no reports of the forced return of persons to a country where they feared persecution.

Section 3 Respect for Political Rights: The Right of Citizens to Change Their Government

The country has taken significant steps toward democratic governance; however, citizens do not have the right to peacefully change their government. The Constitution provides for a democratic political system and hereditary rule by the Amir's branch of the Al Thani family. Legislative authority is vested in an Advisory Council with a majority of elected members. The influence of Bedouin tribal traditions is still strong, and the Government did not permit political parties or organized opposition groups.

The Amir exercises most executive powers, including appointment of cabinet members. The Constitution provides for a new Advisory Council consisting of both elected and appointed officials to draft legislation; however, its members were not elected or appointed during the year. During the year, citizens elected new members for a 29-member Central Municipal Council. Both male and female citizens 18 and older voted and ran as candidates. The Council is a nonpartisan body that addressed local issues such as street repair, green space, trash collection, and public works projects. Its role is to advise the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Agriculture. The Council does not have the authority to change policy.

Lack of political experience and the influence of traditional attitudes and roles continued to limit women's participation in politics; however, in April, citizens elected 1 woman official to the 29-member Central Municipal Council. The Amir appointed 1 woman as Minister of Education in a 16-member Cabinet. The newly appointed President of the University of Qatar was also a woman. The Amir's sister is Vice President of the Supreme Council of Family Affairs and also has the title of Minister.

Section 4 Governmental Attitude Regarding International and Nongovernmental Investigation of Alleged Violations of Human Rights

The Government does not permit independent human rights groups to exist and none were known to exist. No international human rights organizations were known to have requested to investigate conditions in the country during the year.

During the year, members of both government ministries and civil society comprised a new National Committee for Human Rights, which was charged with investigating and improving local human rights conditions.

Section 5 Discrimination Based on Race, Sex, Disability, Language, or Social Status

The law prohibits discrimination in the workplace; however, institutional, cultural, and legal discrimination based on gender, race, and social status existed.

Women

Shari'a prohibits all forms of physical abuse. According to a local quasi-governmental organization on family issues, domestic violence against women occurred, but was not widespread. During the year, there were no publicized arrests or convictions for domestic violence. The maximum penalty for rape is death. Shari'a provides no punishment for spousal rape.

Some employers mistreated foreign domestic servants, especially those from South Asia and the Philippines (see Section 6.e.). Foreign embassies provided shelter for maids who left their employers as a result of abuse or disputes. Abused domestic servants usually did not press charges for fear of losing their jobs.

The legal system allows leniency for a man found guilty of committing a "crime of honor," or a violent assault against a woman for perceived immodesty or defiant behavior; however, such honor killings are rare and none received public attention during the year.

Tradition and law restricted the activities of women. The Government adhered to locally practiced Shari'a in matters of inheritance and child custody. Muslims have the automatic right to inherit from their Muslim spouses; however non-Muslim spouses (invariably wives, since Muslim women cannot legally marry non-Muslims) do not inherit unless their spouse formally wills them a portion (up to one third of the total) of their estates. A Muslim husband does not automatically inherit the property of a non-Muslim wife. Muslim wives have the right to inherit from their husbands; however, they inherit only one-half as much as male relatives. In cases of divorce, young children usually remain with the mother, regardless of her religion.

Women may attend court proceedings but generally are represented by a male relative; however, women may represent themselves if they wish. The testimony of two women equals that of one man, but the courts routinely interpret this on a case-by-case basis. A non-Muslim woman is not required to convert to Islam upon marriage to a Muslim; however, many make a personal decision to do so. A noncitizen woman is not required to become a citizen upon marriage to a citizen. Children born to a Muslim father are considered to be Muslim.

Many women serve as senior professionals in government service, education, health, and private business. Women made up 14 percent of the overall workforce, and 26 percent of the local national workforce, including as university professors, public school teachers, and police. Women appeared to receive equal pay for equal work; however, they often did not receive equal allowances which generally covered transportation and housing costs.

Although women legally were able to travel abroad alone (see Section 2.d.), tradition and social pressures caused most to travel with male escorts.

The Government prohibits independent women's rights organizations; however, the Supreme Council for Family Affairs sought to improve the status of women and the family under both civil and Islamic law. The council established projects such as Early Childhood Education and Development Centers, The National Library for Children, Orphanages, and the Centers for Family Counseling. It has also prepared or contributed to a number of national and international conferences, studies and reports on

the status of women in the country.

Children

The Government is committed to the welfare of children. The Government provided for a well-funded, free public education system (elementary through university) and a complete medical protection program. Education was compulsory for citizens (both boys and girls) through the age of 18. Education through primary school (the equivalent of ninth grade) was compulsory and free for all noncitizen resident children. Medical coverage for noncitizen children was limited.

There was no societal pattern of abuse of children, apart from the trafficked, juvenile camel jockeys (see Section 6.f.).

The Supreme Council for Family Affairs maintained a children's hotline called the Friendly Line for use by children. The system allowed both citizen and noncitizen children to call in with questions and concerns ranging from school, health, and psychological problems to concerns about sexual harassment.

Persons with Disabilities

The law does not address the question of discrimination against persons with disabilities, and the Government did mandate provision of accessibility for persons with disabilities, who also face societal discrimination. The Government maintained a hospital and schools that provide high-quality, free services to persons, including noncitizens, with mental and physical disabilities.

National/Racial/Ethnic Minorities

The Government discriminated based on nationality in the areas of employment, education, housing, and health services. Noncitizens did not receive the same benefits as citizens. They were required to pay for health care, electricity, water, and education (services that were provided free of charge to citizens) and are not permitted to own property. The largest nationality groups among noncitizens were Indian, Pakistani, and Iranian nationals, and Arab nationals of other countries. In the private sector, many citizens of Iranian origin occupied some of the highest positions.

Section 6 Worker Rights

a. The Right of Association

The law prohibits all workers from forming labor unions. The law provides for the establishment of joint consultative committees composed of representatives of the employer and workers. The right of association was limited strictly. The committees did not discuss wages but considered issues such as organization, productivity, conditions of employment, training of workers, and safety measures and their implementation. The International Labor Organization (ILO) was represented at a Gulf Cooperation Council Labor Ministers' meeting in Doha in November. It signed a protocol with GCC countries on cooperation to assist with upgrading training facilities and developing methods to address employment related problems.

Since 1995 the country has been suspended from the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation insurance programs because of the Government's lack of compliance with internationally recognized worker rights standards.

b. The Right to Organize and Bargain Collectively

Collective bargaining was prohibited. Employers set wages unilaterally without government involvement. Local courts handled disputes between workers and employers; however, foreign workers avoided drawing attention to problems with their employers for fear of employer repatriation.

The law provides most workers with the right to strike, but only after their particular grievance has been ruled on by the Labor Department of the Ministry of Civil Service. Employers may close a place of work or dismiss employees once the Department has heard a complaint. The Department widely was perceived to be objective, within a narrow mandate dealing with the nonpayment of wages and poor living conditions. It did not consider wage levels in the absence of labor unions.

Although it was government policy to assist laborers seeking payment of late salaries due (usually through the Labor Department), small groups of laborers resorted to illegal work stoppages to force payment of arrears. Groups of as many as 1,500 workers struck after Labor Department intervention failed to produce payment of back wages. In June, 500 workers employed by 2 construction firms were arrested and later released for disrupting traffic on their way to stage a sit-in protesting unpaid salary arrears.

Government employees, domestic servants, or employee family members do not have the right to strike. No worker in a public utility, health, or security service may strike if it would harm the public or lead to property damage.

Strikes remained frequent during the year. In May, 350 technicians employed by an engineering firm struck over 5-months of unpaid wages. In July, they held 4 company officials hostage for over 12 hours because salaries had still not been paid. Also in July, 250 Asian workers for a company that was part of a troubled construction group staged a sit-in on company premises to protest repeated failures of management to fulfill its promises to settle back pay. The Labor Department claimed that it resolved the vast majority of worker complaints amicably, with a very small percentage referred to the courts for judgment.

There are no export processing zones.

c. Prohibition of Forced or Bonded Labor

The law prohibits forced or bonded labor, including by children; however, foreign workers in some cases were employed under circumstances that constituted forced labor. Three-quarters of the workforce were foreign workers who, dependent on a single employer for residency rights, were vulnerable to abuse. For example, employers must give consent before exit permits are issued to any foreign employee seeking to leave the country. Some employers temporarily withheld this consent to force foreign employees to work for longer periods than they wished. Unskilled workers and domestic servants were particularly vulnerable to nonpayment or late payment of wages.

d. Status of Child Labor Practices and Minimum Age for Employment

The law provides that minors between the ages of 15 and 18 may be employed with parental or guardian permission, and some children worked in small, family-owned businesses; however, child labor occurred. Minors may not work more than 6 hours a day or more than 36 hours a week. Employers must provide the Labor Department with the names and occupations of their minor employees and obtain permission from the Ministry of Education to hire a minor. The Department may prohibit the employment of minors in jobs that are judged dangerous to the health, safety, or morals of minors. Very young children, usually of African or South Asian background, were employed as jockeys in camel races (see Section 6.f.).

The law prohibits forced and bonded labor by children, and the Government generally enforced this prohibition with respect to citizen, but not noncitizen, children (see Section 6.c.).

e. Acceptable Conditions of Work

Although the law provides the Amir with authority to set one, there was no minimum wage. The average wage provided a decent standard of living for a worker and family. According to Planning Council statistics, the average monthly wage in 2001 was \$795 (2,902 riyals). The law prescribes a 48-hour workweek with a 24-hour rest period, although most government offices followed a 36-hour-per-week work schedule. Employees who worked more than 48-hours-per-week, or 36-hours-per-week during the Muslim month of Ramadan, were entitled to overtime pay. Government offices and major private sector companies adhered to this law; however, it was not observed with respect to unskilled laborers and domestic and personal employees, the majority of whom were foreigners. Many such workers frequently worked 7 days per week, and more than 12 hours per day with few or no holidays, no overtime pay, and no effective way to redress grievances.

The Government has enacted regulations regarding worker safety, but enforcement, which is the Ministry of Energy and Industry's responsibility, was lax due to insufficient training and lack of personnel. The Department of Public Safety oversaw safety training and conditions, and the state-run petroleum company had its own safety standards and procedures. The regulations listed partial and permanent disabilities for which compensation may be awarded, some connected with handling chemicals and petroleum products or construction injuries. The law does not specifically set rates of payment and compensation. The Government provided free medical treatment to workers who suffered work-related sickness or injuries. The law does not provide workers specifically the right to remove themselves from hazardous work conditions, and workers often hesitated to do so for fear of dismissal. The law provides any worker with the right to seek legal relief from onerous work conditions; however, domestic servants generally did not pursue such relief in order to avoid repatriation.

Foreign workers may enter the country on a visitor's visa, but a sponsor is needed to convert a visitor's visa to a work visa, and the worker must have a sponsor's permission to depart the country. The Government has also penalized citizen employers who severely violated residence and sponsorship laws by prohibiting them from importing labor until they rectified the situation. Employers mistreated some foreign domestic servants. Such mistreatment generally involved the nonpayment or late payment of wages; in some cases, it involved rape and physical abuse.

f. Trafficking in Persons

The law prohibits prostitution and trafficking in persons; however, men and women have been trafficked into situations of coerced labor and children have been trafficked to the country to serve as jockeys in the camel races.

Children aged 4 to 15, mostly of African, Pakistani, and Bangladeshi origin, were used as jockeys in camel races. Guardians and handlers, who often claimed to be parents, brought the children into the country and supervised their training. They lived in difficult conditions and trained on a daily basis to become riders.

The country also was a destination for women and girls who traveled to the country to work as domestic servants. Some have reported being forced into domestic servitude and sexual exploitation.

The Government actively investigates and prosecutes traffickers. In 2002, 474 foreign laborers filed cases with the labor courts, generally for non-payment of wages; 197 were judged in favor of the plaintiffs; 141 adjourned; and 127 pending or transferred to other courts at year's end. During the year, 579 expatriate laborers filed similar cases with the labor courts. In April, the Government established an interministerial committee to fight trafficking in persons, and the Cabinet adopted an anti-trafficking plan in the Fall. It sponsored training for judges and their deputies on prosecution of trafficking-related offenses. It monitored immigration patterns for evidence of trafficking. The Government provides assistance to domestics who have suffered from abuse and provides shelter for them in deportation centers. It ran a 24-hour hotline to advise women and children in abusive situations.

In 2001, the Government introduced safety measures for camel jockeys including the use of helmets and safety belts, and opened a school and health center for the riders. In 2002, the Camel Racing Association established a minimum weight for jockeys.